

Amherst baseball's run ends in Class A quarterfinals

by **PATRICK J. NAGY**
Reporter

The Amherst Central baseball team can look back on the 2008 season with a lot of pride.

The Tigers won their first division title since 1992 and beat Williamsville South in a Section VI quarterfinal playoff game. Unfortunately, Amherst's playoff run ended with a 4-3 loss against sixth-seeded Lewiston-Porter in a Class A quarterfinal game on Monday, June 2, at Amherst.

The third-seeded Tigers took a 2-0 lead into the fourth inning, but the Lancers, runner-up in the Niagara Frontier League regular season, scored once in the bottom of the fourth and another three times in the sixth. The key hit for Lew-Port in the sixth was a two-RBI single by No. 7 hitter Dan Sharpe that scored Jared Flock and Matt Cattarin. Bobby Morreale hit a ground ball past the Amherst third baseman and down the left field line to score Josh Sorenson for Lew-Port's final run.

In the bottom of the seventh, Amherst's Mike Yanity singled and later scored on a passed ball while Alex Dusenberry was at the plate. Dusenberry would fly out to pitcher Robert Daggett to end the game.

"They came up with the one big hit when we needed it and we didn't hit," said Amherst coach Brian Davis.

The Tigers had problems all day hitting off of Daggett. The Lew-Port senior fired a four-hitter and struck out 10 Amherst batters. Amherst's seven-nine hitters struck out seven times.

One of Amherst's four hits came from Derek Duke, who drove in James Gould in the first inning on a fly ball that fell between the Lew-Port center fielder and shortstop. Gould scored in the second inning after Brandon Jeffords singled to left field.

In addition to Duke, Jeffords and Yanity, Mike Gruttadauria went 1 for 3. Gould stole three bases.

Lew-Port cut Amherst's lead to 2-1 in the top of the fourth when Flock tripled and Jeremy Willard singled him home.

Duke picked up the loss on the mound. He allowed four runs, two earned runs, five hits, three walks and struck out three over six innings. Andrew Hays pitched the seventh and allowed no runs or hits.

Amherst finishes 16-8. They were 5-17 in 2007.

"We gained a lot of experience," said Davis. "We played in every kind of game. We won close games and had two come-from-behind victories. Even in our losses, we didn't get crushed."

Davis said the nicest compliment he received all year from coaches was how disciplined and classy the team conducted themselves.

"After the Lew-Port game, their coach told me that we're a class act," said Davis. "I've heard that often throughout the year. Obviously, wins and losses are great, but it's nice when many coaches say we have a nice program, that we play the game the right way. I think that is what wins you games when you're in tough stretches."

Davis was named ECIC III Coach of the Year. Davis said while only his name goes on the plaque, his assistant coach, Chris Dolce, also deserves a lot of credit.

Hays, Dusenberry, Jeffords and Gould were named ECIC III first-team all-stars, Duke and Gruttadauria made the second-team, and Ben Gaughan was an honorable mention.

In league games, Hays went 6-0 in 41 innings on the mound with a 2.05 ERA. He allowed 12 earned runs, threw 27 strikeouts and limited opposing batters to .163.

Including nonleague games, Hays finished 7-1 with a 2.33 ERA, allowed 30 runs, 20 earned runs, struck out 40 and held opposing batters to a .184 average in 60.2 innings. Seven of the eight games were complete games.

Dusenberry led Amherst in league games with a .595 average and 18 runs. He also had seven RBIs, three doubles and a triple. He also tied with Gould with five stolen bases.

Overall, Dusenberry and Gould each scored 26 runs.

In league games, Gould batted .421 with 13 runs, five RBIs and a team-high nine walks. He also hit two home runs against Williamsville South in a nonleague regular-season game.

In league games, Jeffords hit .488 with 15 RBIs, eight runs and three doubles. Overall, he led the team with a .451 average, 27 RBIs and 37 hits. Jeffords and Duke each hit two triples. Jeffords also went 2-1 in 18 innings on the mound. Opposing batters hit .293 off of him.

Duke batted .381 with 16 RBIs, eight runs and five doubles in league games and overall led the

Tigers with eight doubles and was second on the team with 24 RBIs. On the mound, he finished 4-3 with a 2.39 ERA, allowed 18 runs, 13 earned, led the team with 43 strikeouts and held opposing batters to a .204 average over 38.1 innings.

In league games, Gruttadauria batted .400 with nine RBIs, three

runs and three doubles, and Gaughan hit .318 with seven runs and two RBIs.

Yanity finished 3-2 with a 3.00 ERA but threw four complete games, allowed 23 runs, 15 earned runs, struck out 23 and opposing batters hit .250.

Amherst graduates 12 of their 16 players, only returning one

starter, Gould, and bringing back John Whitehead, Tom Ponticelli (.353 average) and D.J. Baldus.

"These kids work their butts off and wanted to leave their mark on Amherst baseball," said Davis. "They have a lot to be proud of."

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Tigers' Szymkowiak breaks school records at ECICs

Amherst Central senior David Szymkowiak broke school records in the 800 and 1600-meters at ECICs held May 30-31 at John F. Kennedy High School.

Szymkowiak ran the 800 in 1:57.98 to place second and 4:27.76 in the 1600 to take third. The old school records in the 800 and 1600 were held by 1981 grad Keith Davenport (1:58.1) and 1983 grad Tony Rohloff (4:28.2), respectively.

Roland Cook high jumped 5-8 for fourth place. Viron Hale high jumped the same height but had more misses and placed seventh. Dion Brown came in 14th with a leap of 5-4.

Cook also triple jumped 39-10.5 for eighth and long jumped 18-1.25 for 17th.

DeShawn Hough placed fifth in the 110 high hurdles in 15.59. Viron Hale took 10th in 15.90. Hough also led off the 4x400 relay that took fifth in 45.44. Cameron Matthews, Hale and Bert Smith ran the other three legs.

Smith took 12th in the 100 dash (11.87) and 13th in the 200 dash (23.48). Vitaly Sergeyov came in 12th in the 800 (2:06.24) and 15th in the 1600 (4:47.81).

Other finishers for Amherst were Pharoah Gayles (100 dash, 12.34, 30th); Matthews (100 dash, 12.19, 25th); Jamie Schwartz (3200,

10:59.05, 24th); Manny Holloway (triple jump, 33-3, 28th); Adam Dannenhoffer (pole vault, 10-0, 21st); Merrill (shot put, 40-3, 24th).

Elliott Bible qualified in the 400 but did not run.

Amherst took seventh in the Large Schools division with 31 points.

At the Section VI Championships last weekend at Strider Field in Jamestown, Szymkowiak took second in the Division I boys 1600 in 4:30.38 and fourth in the 800 in 1:57.82 (improved 800 school record). Szymkowiak will attend Geneseo State College in the fall.

"David had a great finish to his season," said Amherst coach Jason Cyrek. "I'm excited for him because he has worked hard."

In the Division I triple jump, Hale took fourth with a leap of 42-11 while Cook came in seventh in 42-1.75. Cook placed third in the Division I high jump with a leap of 5-10.

In the Division I 110 hurdles, Hough finished fifth in 15.69 and Hale came in seventh in a time of 16.38. Hough also finished 11th in the Division I long jump with a height of 19-1.5.

Smith qualified in the Division I 100 and 200 dashes but only placed in the 200, going eighth in 23.64.



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South

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At ECICs on May 30-31 at John F. Kennedy High School, Hill finished third in the 400 hurdles (57.30) and Polis came in eighth (59.84). Polis also made it to finals in the 110 hurdles, finishing 12th (16.74).

Scheiss qualified for finals in the 400 dash, taking 15th (54.19). He ran a personal best 53.55 in semifinals.

Galbo ran a personal best 2:10.04 in the 800 and 4:58.66 in the 1600, marking the second race in a row he had run under five minutes.

Yahs Williams ran the 100 dash in 11.96 and just missed qualifying for semifinals. He also threw the shot put 40-4.25.

Jamale Vaughn went a personal best 25.11 in the 200. Stark came two seconds away from a personal best in the 3200, going 10:45.34.

With only four seniors graduating - Krempa, Podvezko, Scheiss, and Rob Gardner, the future looks bright for South boys track.

"The improvement we've had this year has been unbelievable," said South coach Dan Syracuse. "I've worked with a couple of different teams before but I've never seen a group of people improve as much as this year. We scored 150 points last season and more than tripled that this year. There was also so much contribution from the younger athletes that I'm excited to see what happens next year."

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